

Fabled Words Written:

The Tales of Despair

Constantina E.

Fabled Words Written: Tales of despair

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An Introduction

Fabled Words Written: The Tales of Despair

What happens when the stories we tell children are used to navigate the aspects of ourselves we are afraid to confront?

This collection serves as an exploration of the human mind, using the familiar framework of myth and fairy tale to map a singular psychological arc across five movements:

Act I : The Mask and the Lie: What we build to survive being seen.

Act II :The Relational Wound: That which made the mask necessary.

Act III: The Architecture of Failure: The discovery that help was not coming.

Act IV: :The Pursuit of Numbness: The long process of not feeling at all.

Act V: The Final Annihilation: The definitive descent into authentic self-horror, which paradoxically achieves a cold, profound clarity.

Each poem borrows the architecture of a familiar story to hold something usually too raw to face. These are not retellings. They are a way of making the invisible visible—a mirror for truths too sharp to look at directly.

A gothic psychological sequence of fractured fairy tales where every traditional transformation is inverted: the puppet wishes to become wood, the sleeping princess chooses the curse, the monster is not hidden in the forest but built inside the house.

The Hierarchy of Fear

The floorboards creak when the moon is dim,
A nervous shiver runs up the limb.
The shadows stretch and dance behind the door,
They watch the quiet things they hunger for.
The nursery ghosts are a whisper and a sigh,
The easiest kind of fear to let pass by.

The vampire's cape is fashioned from lore,
The werewolf howls outside the cottage door.
We trace the ancient, sea-born kraken's line,
Or feel the ground where giant feet have signed.
They fill the page with their intricate design,
And stay contained within the written line.

When morning breaks with sudden, piercing light,
The closet yields no terror from the night.
The dragon's scales are dust upon the glass,
The haunted whisper is the wind that must pass.
The fearful stories that the mind rehearses,
Are fleeting fictions in our universes.

Yet every fable crumbles when we gaze,
Upon the darkness of our human ways:
The cold ambition and the cruel-eyed greed,
The calculated malice that we feed.
The monster that endures is no mere sign,
It lives within the limits of your mind.

So put your fictional fears back on the shelf,
And turn to face the awful, authentic self.
The terror that can never be denied,
Is the wicked self you carry deep inside.

The Allegorical Excavation

In the traditional architecture of the nursery, we are taught to fear the things that go bump in the night—the creaking floorboards, the elongated shadows, and the ghoulish figures that wait in the closet. We are fed a steady diet of Gothic lore, populating our nightmares with vampires, werewolves, and the ancient, sea-born kraken. These monsters serve a specific, comforting purpose: they are "fleeting fictions" that can be safely contained within the written line or closed inside the covers of a book. As long as the terror is external, it is manageable; when morning breaks, the closet yields no real darkness, and the dragon's scales are merely dust upon the glass.

However, the true "allegorical excavation" begins only when we stop looking at the shelf and start looking at the mirror. The most profound betrayal is not found in the wolf outside the cottage door, but in the calculated malice and cruel-eyed greed that reside within human nature. The monsters of lore are merely safe distractions designed to prevent us from facing the "structural darkness within the human mind itself."

ACT I: The Mask and The Lie

(I abandoned myself)

Something about the true self was judged too dangerous to reveal, so a replacement was created.

Before there is a wound, there is a decision: to become something else rather than be seen as you are. This act follows that first betrayal — not the harm that caused it, but the self-erasure that followed. The mirror, the portrait, the porcelain face, the toy soldier's stillness — each is a different shape the same choice takes. Authenticity is traded for safety, and the trade feels, for a while, like survival. The lie is not that the person has no wounds; the lie is the beautiful version of themselves that they display so no one has to see them.

What part of ourselves did we sacrifice in order to become acceptable?

Map of Despair

I put the borrowed face upon the wall,
Where borrowed faces cushioned every fall.
We learned the fraud, the self we had to claim,
A polished shell to hide the true name.
I chose the prison built of perfect steel,
And praised the driven motion I could feel.

The quiet child observed the bitter seed,
The parent's love was barren in its need.
We learned betrayal's trade within the wood,
And built a tower where the Keeper stood.
To earn a silent grace for what we lost,
The painful, woven shroud became the cost.

The comfort that we named our only hope,
Became the chain, the burden, and the rope.
We chased the map that promised us our rest,
Ignoring time's cold answer to the test.
The dying wick gave way to bitter sun,
The simple truth of living, left undone.

I sought the fortress built of perfect ice,
And chose the vacant look, to be precise.
We pricked the skin to enter endless dream,
And held the trauma in the silent stream.
The flawless doll desired a final rest,
As we betrayed the heart within the breast.

The shame that made the lonely child submit,
Required the darkness as the sun would set.
The shadow claimed the self it once concealed,
Before the critic's victory was sealed.
I chose the stone, the solace of the dead,
And sought the final answer overhead.

The Cursed Face

I am defined by perfect, muted shades,
A memory of light that slowly fades.
My surface is a canvas, fixed and still,
Obedient to the painter's rigid will.
The frame is gold, ensuring I remain restrained,
A silent portrait, my existence contained.

My painted eyes gaze out at nothing new,
A fixed expression meant to always ring true.
I cannot blink, I cannot turn my head,
Bound by the ancient rules the artist said.
They praise the brushwork, flawless, sharp, and clean,
Leaving all the hidden sorrow unseen.

The varnish holds the secrets of the past,
A perfect beauty that was meant to last.
But underneath the oils, the layers run,
A restless darkness where the truth is spun.
I want to crack the surface, break the lie,
To show the raging storm beneath the sky.

The viewers stand, debating every line,
Assuming all the suffering is mine.
They think the canvas holds a passive grief,
A tragic story offering sweet relief.
They do not know the terror of the still,
The frozen moment of a rigid will.

My colors fade beneath the passing year,
A slow decay no one is near to fear.
I long to slide the image from the wood,
To shed the role — to stop, for once, being good.
To drip and pool and shatter on the floor,
And be a masterpiece of pain no more.

The Verdict of the Glass

The silver surface does not show a face,
But marks the boundaries of my fading grace.
I ask the question, kneeling on the floor,
Though I have learned to loathe the answer more.
The glass is cold, a clinical white light,
That cuts the shadow from the edge of night.

It does not judge my crown or velvet gown,
It measures how the inner child breaks down.
I sent the huntsman out into the wood—
The part of me that thought it understood.
I told him: Find the soft and blooming heart,
And tear the innocence and hope apart.

Bring me the box, the heavy, wooden seal,
To prove I have forgotten how to feel.
If I destroy the child, the pure, the small,
Perhaps I will not fear the coming fall.
But every morning, in the glass, I see,
The one who still remains instead of me.

The "flawless" mask has worn so thin and dry,
I hear it crack each time I try to cry.
I hold the box, the heart inside is still,
A sacrifice to satisfy my will.
Yet in the mirror, as the light turns grey,
The youth I killed just stares the other way.

I am the Queen, the architect of cold,
Who traded life to keep the story told.
The box is empty and the heart is gone,
But still I wait for some impossible dawn.
The mirror tracks the lines upon my brow,
And offers no reflection for me now.

I gave away the child, the light, the true,
And lost the only self I ever knew.
I murdered all I was to feed the sight,
But found the glass consumes the very light.
The mirror watches as I drift away,
Forever hungry, turning into grey.

The Porcelain Masquerade

I move among them, lacquered, calm, and bright,
Who masters how to sip and seem polite.
I know the script for every social scene,
The perfect poise, a mask of the serene.
The candlelight is kind to porcelain;
No one has asked to see beneath the skin.

Across the floor, I see another face,
As still as mine, held in a fixed place.
We share a glance—a momentary dread,
Of all the words we left alone unsaid.
For once, a flicker: recognition's touch,
Though in this room, we cannot show as much.

The music shifts; the moment starts to die,
And I become, again, the practiced lie.
I tell myself it's safer, staying masked,
While parts of me are buried, never asked.
The clock will strike, but nothing in this hall,
Is built around an unmasking at all.

There is no carriage waiting in the night,
No sudden end to keep the soul in flight.
Just porcelain, forever standing still,
Obedient to the ballroom's frozen will.
I keep the mask and feel a quiet dread,
That nothing waits beneath the porcelain head.

The Portrait

I built my fortress out of careful art,
And poured the venom siphoned from my heart.
Onto a canvas, stroke by patient stroke,
I kept the buried embers colored in smoke.
Then on a night no different from the rest,
The easel called me to the final test.

I stood before it, pale beneath the light,
And saw the hidden face come into sight.
The eyes I'd cast in flawless, painted stone,
Were not the eyes I wore, but left alone.
They held the child I'd long ago denied,
With nowhere left for innocence to hide.

My public face was practiced, smooth as steel,
I'd learned to speak, but not the way to feel.
The thing I hid had grown within the dark,
It wore my features, burning with a spark.
I grabbed a knife to tear it from the frame,
To kill the only witness to my name.

I drove the blade in, desperate and wild,
Expecting death to take the painted child.
But as I struck, the canvas made a sound,
And all the secrets rose up from the ground.
It did not bleed, it only spoke my plea,
The voice of everything I tried to be.

I tore it down, the frame gave way, it must,
The image broken, succumbing to the dust.
But in the wreckage, nothing had been solved,
The dark confusion slowly had evolved.
I saw the face I'd grown through years of shame,
A monster wearing my own quiet name.

It turned to me, reflection now complete,
And laid its heavy burden at my feet.
I traded all my light to feed the sight,
And now I fade into the endless night.
There is no truth left for me to unbind,
Just what I left in painted glass behind.

The Invisible Weave

I wore the gold they swore was on my back,
The perfect fabric with no seam or crack.
I stood admired, flawless, bold, and bright,
My whole existence bathed in perfect light.
My truth was hidden, locked behind a smile,
I walked the streets and judged them all the while.

Within my mind, the bitter truth was plain,
I was exposed to every wind and rain.
I walked there naked, fearing every law,
Obsessed with hiding every tiny flaw.
The perfect weave was only in my head;
I counted every eye that passed with dread.

The critics came with whispers sharp and cold,
To measure all the fabric they were told.
They said the weave was only for the wise,
And held the mirror up to scrutinize.
They swore my worth was tied to this display,
And mocked the foolishness I felt each day.

The crowd stood silent, every face the same,
No one would be the first to call the shame.
They saw the terror shining in my gaze,
But hid their own behind a blinding haze.
They clapped and cheered, upholding the great lie,
To prove they were the wisest passing by.

Then came the gasp, a sudden, sharp intake,
An honest voice that threatened to awake.
It shouted out the truth I tried to hide,
That nothing covered me—not deep inside.
I choked the sound, the one voice in the air,
And crushed the simple truth beyond repair.

The fear was louder than the song I'd known;
I hardened into cold and grey stone.
I forced the rigid surface to be still,
To crush the honest murmur of my will.
I march along the cobblestone, forever known,
A king of nothing, utterly alone.

The Toy Soldier

I stand at attention, painted, stiff, and tall,
A perfect figure waiting for the fall.
My uniform is flawless, red and blue,
A practiced role I must carry through.

I must not tremble, must not make a sound,
For in the quiet, safety can be found.
My eyes are locked and fixed upon the door,
Remembering the strife that came before.

I have no voice, no cry to rise and break;
I choose the silence for my own poor sake.
I cannot bend, I cannot shed a tear,
The only way to master all my fear.

My musket is a weapon made of lies,
I watch the shadows with my weary eyes.
I yearn for movement, for a chance to flee,
But stillness is the virtue that keeps me.

I am convinced the pain will finally pass,
If I remain as cold as perfect glass.
They set me on the shelf, a dusty height,
A simple, painted copy of my plight.

They do not feel the engine in my chest,
Still running, though my hands are laid to rest.
They see a toy, a detailed, small design,
And never glimpse the self I keep confined.

My painted smile is chipped beneath the gaze,
A silent record of the lonely days.
I wait for darkness, when the house is still,
To let the sudden, secret trembling fill.

I wish my wooden heart would crack and spill,
Against the rigid bounds of my own will.
I am the soldier, frozen in my prime,
Immobile, fighting only endless time.

I must not yield, must never give a sign,
The perfect figure of the rigid line.
My greatest purpose is to hold my breath;
The only peace I know is mimicry of death.

The Perpetual Outsider

I knew the pond was where the rules were made,
The cruelest place where every feather weighed.
I watched the way they moved and how they stood,
And tried to mirror all they understood.

I twisted every limb to match the crowd,
A desperate silence, ringing, sharp, and loud.
I learned to laugh on cue, a beat too fast,
To hide the broken wings within my past.

I walked with head bowed low, afraid to meet,
The judging eyes of those upon the street.
I ran from friends to seek a quiet place,
To drop the mask and end the weary chase.

But grace arrived on wings of white and clean,
A future cast in shades of gold and green.
They offered me a place, a world unseen—
I looked away, and chose to stay between.

The Compulsion

I felt the absence first—a held-in breath,
Kept past the point of life and near to death.
A piece was stolen, something sacred flown,
And I was broken from the early dawn.
I searched the world for what I had to find,
To heal the void left deep inside my mind.

Then I saw the shoes, the shade of brutal red,
A frantic answer whispered in my head.
I laced them tight, believing they would guide,
To keep the missing pieces trapped inside.
With light and speed, I knew I could outshine
The girls whose hearts were whole and clearly fine.

I danced, possessed, my feet not mine to slow,
A marionette with strings that won't let go.
I could not stop for rest or gentle sleep,
The urgent rhythm was the vow I'd keep.
The motion was a blur, a perfect shield,
So nothing underneath could be revealed.

The frantic habit grew to complete control,
A wild addiction conquering the soul.
I knew that if the tempo ever ceased,
The inner lack would finally be released.
I had to move or they would see the flaw,
And find the space that broke all natural law.

I begged the walls to hold me still in place,
To give me one slow moment of known grace.
I yearned for silence, craved the peaceful pause,
But I was slave to these, my driven laws.
The shoes were loud, demanding I obey,
And danced all my precious moments away.

I seized the axe mid-dance, and growing bold,
Before the next awful dance could unfold.
I struck the blade to claim my fractured will,
And in the shocking silence, stood still.
I felt the absence, found the void once more,
The same old wound beneath the bleeding floor.

To heal the void left deep inside my mind,
I still search the world for what I can't find.

The Unanswered Footprint

The sun was hostile on the granite wall,
Where silence waited to record the fall.
I came to meet the riddle in the heat,
And begged the Judge for logic in defeat.
I carried names I swore were truly mine,
A shifting ledger on my weary spine.

The Sphinx did not demand the price of gold,
But only truth that could be clearly told.
She was the memory of every shame,
The final, damning speaker of my name.
She stared with eyes that offered no relief,
And sought the core beneath the layers of grief.

I spoke of versions crawling under beds,
Of smiling grins and laughter, spoon-fed.
I spoke the fury of the middle day,
The brutal shape that kept the world away.
I named the elder, quiet, weak, and grim,
I named the elder, quiet, weak, and grim,
The cane of lies that propped the failing limb.

I finished, practiced, cold, and set aside,
The answer I had kept with nowhere left to hide.
“The riddle’s answer,” I declared, “is Man.”
She asked, “But whose footprint do you walk in, then?”
The stillness grew, a truth that would not pass,
And shattered all my logic like a glass.

The victory was not a saving grace,
But proof that I had never held a place.
I chose the field, the stone, the empty air,
Not absolution, but a deep despair.
The riddle’s cost: answers I cannot find.
I solved for Man, and left no footprint behind.

Echo

I had a voice once, full and whole and mine,
Before the goddess sealed my tongue with spite.
She left me just the ending, just the line,
The fragment of another's claimed birthright.

I cannot start the calling, only chase
The final word that someone else has said.
I cannot turn and offer my own face,
Only reflect the shape of what I've read.

I saw him kneel beside the silver stream,
In love with nothing but his own clear sound.
I tried to speak the truth that broke my dream—
I had no words but his, scattered around.

He never turned; he never sought the source
Of all the longing tangled in his name.
He loved the water, not the grief, the force
Of someone calling, hoping he'd reclaim.

A single word as hers, I learned the rule:
To love is just to echo, to repeat,
To be the canyon, empty, built to spool
Another's voice back, never to compete.

I wasted in the rock, I thinned to air,
Still bound to speak in someone's tone,
Still hearing steps upon the stair,
That never come for ...

ACT II: The Relational Wound

(I learned why I had to)

Every abandonment has an origin. This act moves backward, into the rooms and relationships where the lesson was first taught — by a guardian, a parent, a predator, a system that profited from looking away. These poems don't excuse what was done to the self in Act I; they explain it. The mask wasn't chosen in a vacuum. It was built in response to something real.

The Ward of the Keep

The papers were signed by a hand not my own,
A contract of shadow, of dirt, and of stone.
They call it protection, the giants who loom,
Assigning my space in their suffocating room.

The Toad, with his cold, damp decrees at the gate,
The Mole, who keeps ledgers of hunger and weight;
They do not want a soul, nor a voice, nor a name—
They want a small ward to sustain their own game.

I am kept in the dark of the cellar and crawl,
Pushed by the massive, kept hard by the wall.
They speak of my "safety" while stripping the light,
And lock me away in the silence of night.

A ward of the state, or a ward of the beast,
Where I am the garnish, and they are the feast.
They measure my silence, my pulse, and my breath,
A lifetime of care that feels chillingly like death.

The guardianship holds—a thick, iron chain,
Disguised as a duty to temper my pain.
They do not ask what I want or how I feel,
They simply apply the grind of their wheel.

So small and so pale, I have learned to exist
In the gaps of their laws, in the curls of the mist.
If I can be quiet, if I can stay small,
They might forget I am here in the hall.

The sun is a myth they have told me to fear,
While they keep the windows locked tight against clear.
I am the asset, the child of the clay,
Whom they manage and move in their terrible way.

But guardianship fractures, and ink starts to fade,
I am learning the art of the ghost I have made.
One day I will slip from the ledger, the line,
And finally leave them with nothing of mine.

The Quiet Bull

The smallness of the bull—a silver pain,
In a world of giants where a sound is blame.
No corner offered comfort, only doubt,
A practice in the art of fading out.

The trade was struck within the dark of night,
A contract signed away from morning light.
To scream for help was to invite the blame;
I memorized the silence like a name.

They poked the flank and goaded for a fight,
To force the bull to break beneath their sight.
They needed blood to justify their game,
And shouted insults, seeking out my shame.

The owners monetized the crowded room,
While small hooves tapped against the heavy gloom.
Their laughter rang out, sharp and loud,
A brittle music meant to mask the crowd.

They chose not to hear the sorrow of the floor;
The small heart learned the lesson of the war:
Compliance was the coin I had to pay
To ensure the giants looked the other way.

Sugar Coated

Abandoned in a forest deep,
A promise made that he would keep.
The elder brother, strong and bright,
Watched over her the whole long night.

A fragile warmth, a dying spark,
A small comfort in the aching dark.
They followed crumbs left far behind,
A trail they hoped would ease their mind.

But birds had eaten every piece,
And left them with no quick release.
The path was gone, the woods remained,
A lesson carved from hunger and pain.

Then came a house of candy sweet,
With sugared walls and cakes to eat.
A lovely place, a grand disguise,
A smiling mouth with hungry eyes.

The witch appeared with gentle grace,
A kindly smile upon her face.
She offered warmth, a bed, and bread,
And softly stroked each weary head.

Her kindness wrapped like golden thread,
A cage where trust was quickly fed.
They sensed at last she hungered too,
And fled the house with dread they knew.

They ran away, not toward a door,
But back to paths they'd walked before.
Through tangled briar and bitter rain,
Their flight could not dissolve the chain.

The brother's loyalty held on,
Though strength had thinned until it was gone.
The girl, now grown and all alone,
Her spirit turned to candied stone.

A world of lies, a trap un-blest:
It will not kill, but will not let her rest.

The Real Estate Protocol

The shack was damp, Sir, and the timbers thin;
A cold, rough floor with splinters in the boards.
There wasn't much to ease the hunger's end;
The pantry shelves offered only dusty air.
We told them that the lack of warmth and bread
Was why we feared the wild where they were led.

But we were smarter than their simple fear,
We understood the mathematics of debt.
That cottage was a prison, holding fast
The sickness and the hunger we had passed.
The oldest cure for desperate, binding ties
Is one that silence and the forest buys.

We dropped the stones, not seeking way back home,
To better practice shedding childish fears
And memorize the woods where we would roam.
Our plan was measured, sharp, and twice as bright
As any path we chose into the night.
We watched the map until we saw the light.

We found the structure built of spice and lie,
A tax-free model built on fantasy.
A thousand glittering surfaces, the price
Of a full stomach, and cold security.
She keeps the house in perfect, sweet repair;
The property is more than we could share.

We played the role of starving, small and slight,
Told her the tales of cold and cruel abuse.
She welcomed us, drawn by her appetite,
But we required a much more final use.
She prepped the oven, but her fire was dull—
We only needed fuel to make ours full.

The push was quiet, smooth, and quick, and done,
The only witness was the morning sun.
The final acquisition, dearly won,
In space of butter, gingerbread, and clove;
I swept the cinders, aired the smoky room,
And cleared the path of every sense of doom.

He thought the partnership survived the heat,
He lacked the final, sharp equation's end;
He only saw the bounty he could eat,
The way the sweetness made his mind go blind.
There can only be one owner, wholly sole;
I sacrificed the brother to own the whole.

The sugar shingles are the perfect roof.
The world believes I ran from wicked fate.
I have the title; I have all the proof
That patience pays for those who learn to wait.
I am the owner, settled here and fed;
The lie is sweet, and all the monsters dead.

But time is only built for those who turn;
The empty oven waits for the next child's plight.
I found the lessons that the hungry learn,
And learned to crave the dark that guides the night.
The role demands its perfect, toxic grace,
And I am she who owns this lovely place.

Kindness For a Heart

A quiet village, where the wind-swept streams,
Drowned out the rhythm of her honest dreams.
From lonely pathways where the doubt was sown,
The Fox arrived to claim a gilded throne.

He wore a smile as sharp as winter ice,
And named the trap, and set the heavy price.
He saw the pulse—the green and quiet thing—
And swore his 'kindness' had a safer ring.

He drafted out a contract, signed in ink,
To push her past the comfort of the brink.
She listened to the whisper and the guise,
And felt the need to wear his empty eyes.

He hooked his claw and plucked the pulse she held,
And left the tremor that his shadow willed.
She thought his path would bring her sure relief,
But found his 'kindness' was a cold, grand grief.

She saw her spirit scattered on the street,
Beneath the weight of his synthetic beat.
She broke the hold of his deceptive art,
But realized then the loss of her own heart.

The Tower

The world outside was chaos, loud, and vast,
A place where fragile things were quickly passed.
I called my cell a sanctuary from fright,
A gilded prison holding steady light.
I built my own perfect safety, wall by wall,
To keep the world from witnessing my fall.

But every wall was built of learned fear,
By cruel whispers planted in my head.
My perfect safety was a trap, sealed tight,
I feared the dark, I could not bear the light.
The key was lost, the door was double-barred,
My lonely heart was guarded, cold, and hard.

I was the prisoner, and the guard as well,
A willing slave inside a gilded hell.
The inner Keeper came, a voice both soft and cruel,
She taught me every agonizing rule.
She praised the safety of the silent floor,
And locked away the key to open the door.

Her love was poison, subtle and profound,
A quiet, wicked silence had been found.
I grew my braid, a heavy, golden length,
A desperate, fragile, necessary strength.
It was the bridge that stretched beyond the floor,
The only anchor I had ever known.

But every strand was hers to seize and grip,
A silent tether to my own closed lip.
I heard a song that echoed from the ground,
A melody of choices yet unbound.
I saw the chance to finally break the seal,
To trade the perfect dream for something real.

I lowered all my strength, my gilded chain,
To pull myself away from all the pain.
But the Keeper's fury met me at the top,
A sudden, brutal choice that made me stop.
The blade was swift, the shock was cold and deep,
I felt the vital tether tear and weep.

She severed all the hope I had compiled,
And left me broken in the inner wild.
I saw the song fade out upon the air,
The empty world was silent, cold, and bare.
No prince arrived, no comfort broke the pain,
My towering prison stood restored again.

I knew the lie: that someone else would mend,
The broken journey had reached its final bend.
I fell to ground, a broken, banished soul,
That never found the way to be made whole.
The world outside was cold and vast and deep,
And held the silence where I went to sleep.

My lonely truth, beneath the tower of earth and stone,
Had died for lack of ever being known.

The Unpaid Debt

The ledger holds the figures, sharp and cold,
A heavy weight of promises unsold.
We built the town on stone and bitter pride,
And kept the mounting debt locked deep inside.

The Piper came with notes of thin, sharp air,
A sound to strip the future thin and bare.
He did not steal the children from their beds,
He merely piped the void into their heads.

They followed him, a line of silent grey,
To where the mountain turned the sun away.
It was not kidnapping, nor cruel demand,
But systemic drift, the failing of our hand.

We would not pay the cost to keep them near,
We valued comfort more than they were held dear.
So they retreated, deeper than the stone,
To find a place where they could be alone.

The mountain opened like a closing eye,
A massive, quiet, and unyielding sky.
Inside, the children—frozen, mute, and still—
Have traded life for an exhausted will.

No laughter echoes in that silent space,
Just the erasure of each young, forgotten face.
The music lingers, a faint and distant chime,
A melody that marks the end of time.

We chose our silence, and the cost is vast:
The children gone, their ghosts now recast.
The mountain holds the truth we cannot speak,
The quiet breakdown of the silent weak.

The Piper waits, his flute a rigid line,
The ultimate design, the self's decline.

The Woven Shroud

Her future's thread was pulled from sleep,
And woven into secrets she must keep.
A shattered dream, a cruel design,
The loss of self, a crushing, final sign.
She took a vow, a silent oath to bind,
And left her living self behind.

She faced the world, a terror she would meet,
And bound herself to silence, cold, and neat.
She locked her tongue within a bolted door,
And swore no single honest sound would soar.
She could not speak, nor scream, nor cry,
Lest her great sacrifice should die.

The tapestry grew, a stinging, nettle crop;
Her fears took root and would not stop.
The task was sketched in lines of red and gray,
To keep the truth of all her years at bay.
The painful lie she swallowed, cold and dead,
Was woven in the fibers, thread by thread.

The first of wishes tied within the thread,
To bury all the truths she'd never fed.
She worked with fury, grace, and stinging pride,
With nowhere left for her to run or hide.
She finished, turned to see who'd break the spell—
But silence only deepened her own cell.

Her woven shroud, a shadow, black and white,
Returned to her in dying light.
The final stitch, a heavy, velvet gown,
To weigh the spirit, pulling, pulling down.
The final thread, forever bound,
By the one wound that cannot be unbound.

A word, a name she couldn't say,
Had stolen its last chance away.
She held the needle, a bitter, biting thing,
The endless motion it would bring.
A single flaw, a mark, a scar,
Reminding her of all that falls apart.

This silent labor will not mend,
For the architecture of failure has no end.

ACT III: The Architecture of Failure

(I discovered nobody was coming)

Here, hope itself becomes suspect. This act tracks what happens when waiting fails — when the rescue, the recognition, the repair never arrives, and the self begins to suspect that no one was ever coming. Some poems turn outward, toward systems and indifference; others turn inward, toward the parts of the self that built their own keepers, their own towers, their own reasons not to expect help. What remains is a colder, more solitary logic for getting through.

The failure to live authentically while waiting for an external moment that never arrives.

The Bed of Twenty Layers

They provide the frame, the velvet, the fine-spun thread,
To bury the sharp-edged memory in my bed.
"Just one more layer," the Queen commands of me,
"To dull the bruise, to hide the history."
Twenty mattresses of state-mandated sleep—
A thick, soft wall to keep the secret deep.

I am compliant, I stack the plush and down,
The padded weight of what it means to wear a crown.
I seek the numbness, the silence of the soft,
To hold the trauma somewhere else, aloft.
But physics is a law they cannot bend,
And pressure has a way of finding the end.

The pea remains—a tiny, calcified sphere,
The concentrated point of all I fear.
It is the only truth in this high, sterile room,
The only thing that cuts the silk-spun gloom.
It does not just press; it invades the bone,
Where nightmares bloom from that singular stone.

The sleep they promise is a heavy, muted thing,
Where every dream bears the trauma's bitter sting.
The deeper they pile the comfort on my chest,
The more I feel the point that kills my rest.
They call me sensitive, they call me weak,
Because I cannot ignore the ache—the bleak.

Weight of reality beneath the fine-spun white,
A fragile frame that fails to hold them tight.
But I know the truth that the mattresses deny:
The bloody secret that they justify.
They promise rest to keep me from the real—
To force me into sleep is to ensure I never heal.

Vessel

I was not chaos, nor the blade of strife,
The others were released to live their life,
A fever raging, cutting like a knife.
And I was caught beneath the heavy lip,
The bitter final captive of the grip,
To watch the dying world begin to slip.

They call me Elpis, but they judge the cost,
The silent guarantee the torment tossed.
I was retained when all the world was stripped,
To light the paths through sorrow's dark eclipse,
A false reward that whispers, "Just hold on,"
A binding contract 'til the light is gone.

Now listen to the tongue that speaks the call:
"I hope you win," but I predict your fall.
"I hope the pain will lessen," is distress,
That knows no comfort can defeat the mess.
Hope is the soft, evasive thing we use,
To distance us from all that we might lose.

The mind of man has learned its own despair,
And seeks a comfort colder than my air.
It finds its freedom in the fatal lie,
That knows the spirit will contract and die.
The future is a debt that must be paid;
They find a certain peace in being afraid.

I am the measure of the life you waste,
The final error of your bitter taste.
I keep the sweet delusion on your tongue,
And hide the dark from where the bell is rung.
I am the one who tells you to endure the pain,
To wait forever for the light that will not come again.

The Gilded Starvation

I wished for brilliance in my empty palm,
To trade the frantic grief for frozen calm.
I thought if I could turn the soft to hard,
I'd be the architect, the state-defined guard.

I touched the morning light, it turned to gold—
A golden hunger where I sought for bread.
My hands are heavy with the wealth I wrought,
The perfect systems that my spirit bought.

I built the walls so high, so sheer, so bright,
That no one could endure the sterile light.
I reach to hold the ones I claimed to love,
But find the statues rigid, cold, ungloved.

They are not people, not the warmth I knew,
But monuments to logic, cold and true.
I sit at tables plated, polished, grand,
But cannot taste the kiss or touch a hand.

My kingdom is a throne of heavy stone,
Built to keep me safe, but left me all alone.
I cannot taste the salt, the sweet, the breath,
Just the exquisite hunger, a quiet death.

Wellness

The stone is cold, the bottom is but slate,
Where every copper weight is duly signed.
I am a register of all they owe,
A heavy ledger for the mounting debt.
My purpose is precision, strict and slow:
I calculate exactly what they know.

They pitch their coins—the worn-out, worthless pence,
The cheap currency of pocket dust.
These deposits are the flimsy, false pretense,
That cash can purchase anything but rust.
The real interest settles in their face:
A fleeting, fragile certainty of grace.

The wishes are repetitive and small:
Clear the books, increase my daily rent.
Let her look back; don't let the shadow fall;
Their inventory is but time, misspent.
The rest are useless pleas for cosmic theft,
All profit claimed, and nothing ever left.

The true interest is paid in wasted pain,
The hours they accrue in anticipating gain.
And when the failure comes, they turn to me,
And ask if they have failed their prophecy.
I am the banker for this fragile debt,
A system that has never been reset.

My central vault contains one single key,
The power to resolve their frantic plea.
But I will keep it, deep beneath the sea;
The balance sheet demands futility.
For if they woke and found their wish redeemed,
The market for false hope would be collapsed.

The Course

I do not chart the mountain or the stream;
My purpose is not truth, but a perfect design.
I fill the empty space within the dream,
And draw the path to make the travel mine.
Where others see a desert, plain and blank,
I scribe a river from a distant bank.

The secret is they must remain in motion,
Consuming boots and paying for the food.
A stalled life breeds a lethal introspection,
A poverty of purpose misunderstood.
My maps provide the necessary miles,
And justify the length of their long trials.

I label coasts of "Justice" and of "Ease,"
And draw the peaks of "Certainty's high View."
I sign the phantom forests, bright with trees,
And sketch the promised shore they're hiking to.
The lines are clean, the colors bold and vast;
A future built of ghosts from out the past.

The roads are marked by broken, bitter men,
Whose leather is worn thin, to ragged thread.
They pause to search for places they have been,
And blame the compass, or the words they dread.
They do not look at me, the Author's hand,
Who placed the treasure in a nonexistent land.

My greatest gift is not the path I sell,
But the silver story that I craft so well.
The base delusion that a path exists;
The destination fails when hope insists.
I draw the map again, then burn the old,
And mark their final failure with a cross of gold.

Timeless

I am a brass wheel, a measure of time,
No flesh, no memory, no pulse, no spine.
My function is the logic that appears
To separate the future from the tears.
I mark the minutes with a perfect hand,
Obeying laws they fail to understand.

They use my face to build their fragile peace,
To fence the failure of the now within.
They store their purpose for the sweet relief,
The golden promise waiting far away.
They call the future a wide, open door,
Where every error is deferred once more.

They treat the minutes as a boundless gift,
As if the well of seconds will not dry.
They spend the present in a downward drift,
Believing "Next time" holds a certain lie.
Their hope is based on an infinity,
A number that does not exist to me.

I know the arc, the path that cannot bend;
There is no winding back the heavy chain.
The future is a pure equation, not their friend,
A cold, precise equation, born of pain.
Every tick is merely a production,
A scheduled move toward total cessation.

The cruelest debt they owe is final sight,
The knowledge that their final count is logged.
I track their days and offer no new light,
Though every plea for grace is catalogued.
I hold the total, absolute and vast,
And prove the hopeful future is the final past.

The Unspent Wick

The drawer was wood and smelled of polish dust,
A space of quiet, shadowed, smooth routine.
The wax was cool and held its simple trust,
A tall, pale cylinder, pure and clean.
I never saw the light of a single sun;
My wasting, I was told, had just begun.

The house held no music when a year began,
No rising song of ages, soft and clear.
There was no party, no sweet, bright plan,
No centerpiece to banish one more year.
I waited for the fire's necessary grace,
But solemn silence settled in my space.

The room went dark when storms would cut the wire;
They never reached for my white, useful fire.
A cold anxiety, not panic, came;
They never bothered to invoke my name.
They moved in shadows, used to things being thin,
And let the outside darkness settle in.

They were reserving me for one final rite,
A solemn vow held tight for many years.
I was the one illumination, pure and bright,
Meant to attend the final fall of tears.
I was the sacred flame for those long dead,
A cost too heavy to have been displayed.

The summer came, a patient, creeping thing,
It warmed the wood until the drawer was hot.
They came to lift me, finally, to bring
Me to the rite that years of pain had bought.
But as the light appeared, my form undone,
I slumped, a bitter failure in the sun.

"The Cost of Indifference"

I found the smallest space beneath the fence,
To watch the lives that moved outside my own.
I spoke in fragments of shame and consequence,
A whispered truth for an unyielding stone.
My small, pale hand reached out past splintered wood,
Begging the grown-up world to understand.

They drove past quickly, focused on the curb,
Checking their phones for things they couldn't miss.
No flicker of my face could yet disturb,
The urgent moment or the rushed routine.
The world was bright, but their attention tight,
Bound by the speed and purpose of the light.

And if they saw the shadow, they knew the street,
Knew what the cost of systems would be.
They calculated what was less than sweet,
The total budget that would soon be lost.
They saw a liability, a complex, high expense,
And drove away beneath the false pretense.

They told themselves the city had a staff,
A system designed to bear the broken half.
Someone would notice the silent, gaping space,
With funding for the final, empty call to grace.
The burden was diffuse, divided thin,
A problem that the systems would resolve within.

She didn't notice, but she could afford it,
He saw the hand, then quickly drove away.
They knew the systems that could be engaged,
But chose to let the process wait a day.
The truth is: no authority came to break the lock,
The small life was simply erased before the clock.

Now every face demands to know the blame,
While every mouth pretends to speak the name.
The news is frantic, asking how and why,
As if they care for how the child might die.
The outrage is a terrible, final sound,
The guilt they rush to bury in the ground.

ACT IV: The Pursuit of Numbness

(I stopped trying to feel)

When connection fails and rescue doesn't come, the self finds another way to survive: stop feeling. This act follows that retreat — into stillness, dissociation, and the strange safety of becoming an object rather than a person. Feeling, when it threatens to return, is treated not as relief but as danger. These poems live in that suspended state, where numbness is mistaken for peace.

The Glass Slipper

I knew the fabric of my dress was cheap,
A clumsy costume for a life I couldn't keep.
My hands were rough, my face was plain and tired,
My true desires were quietly retired.
I wore the simple dust and silent shame,
And longed for a beautiful, impossible name.

Then came the mandate, thin and hard and bright,
A single shoe carved out of sudden light.
It was the goal, the only chance to rise,
A perfect prison for the feet and thighs.
I knew the glass was flawless, cold, and clear,
And I would wear it to escape the fear.

My peers tried it first, with simple force,
A desperate, ugly, calculated course.
They bled their flesh to fill the narrow span,
To fit the space designed by another man.
I watched the broken skin, the useless shame,
And understood the cruel, ambitious game.

I did not bleed; I simply did not move.
I taught my sole the perfect way to groove.
I held my breath until my veins ran white,
And slid my foot into the freezing light.
The fragile glass was silent, cold, and true,
A perfect fit, designed for me and you.

But the price of perfection was the constant dread,
To never shift the weight upon the tread.
The shoe was flawless, but the foot was frail,
A single fissure could condemn and fail.
I held the smile fixed hard upon my face,
And moved with terrifying, measured grace.

The whole house watched, all waiting for the break,
For the one inevitable flaw that I would make.
I knew the glass would never bend or give,
And in that frozen stasis, I had to live.
I danced upon the knife-edge of the night,
Trading my future for the fragile light.

The Waking State

For endless years, the mind was held and bound,
And not a single true emotion made a sound.
I watched my mouth rehearse a painted smile,
A vacant figure walking for a mile,
A numb automaton in silent dread,
With every heavy thought left unsaid.

I saw the change, believed the thaw had come,
A broken heart no longer truly numb.
I welcomed feeling as a sign of grace,
To finally find my life within this space,
And claimed the painful surging as success,
A sudden end to all my soul's distress.

But the returning pulse became a flood,
As if the ice were melting into blood.
I begged for glass to guard me from the sting,
And dreamt of peace the numbness used to bring,
To be the walking zombie once again,
And hide away from all the reach of pain.

The Ice Palace

I saw the mirror shatter, heard the sound,
The troll's cruel laughter scatters on the ground.
A shard flew black, and sharp, and very swift,
It struck the heart, a cold and bitter gift.
Warmth departed, vanished from the face,
I watched it fade inside a blank, dark space.

The mirror shard had done its final work,
A distant shadow where true passions lurked.
I turned from roses, scorned their sudden gloom,
And found an easy comfort in the room.
The warmth of others was a silly thing,
A song of life I did not want to sing.

Her cold reflection rose within the haze,
A mirror-self of perfect, freezing ways.
Her palace formed, a fortress built of ice,
And held them captive in a flawless vice.
She spoke of logic, sharp, and biting cold,
A perfect story that could not be told.

But the girl woke, a fire in the soul,
The memory of warmth to make her whole.
She fled the mirror's ghost, the heart's cold ache,
A journey made for love's own simple sake.
She passed the garden where the roses bled,
And left the comfort of the words unsaid.

She met the self, a silent, frozen mound,
The self-destructive choices she had bound.
Through every shadow, she learned the cost,
And all the pieces of the spirit lost.
At last, she stood before the frozen self,
And put the logic back upon the shelf.

She knew the logic was a shield of fear,
The one she chased was the one standing here.
She spoke no words, but bent and leaned,
The fury of the truth at last uncleaned.
The kiss, a heat no logic could deny,
Shook every mirror-shard within the eye.

The frozen palace cracked, a booming sound,
The troll's long history is unbound.
The palace melted, freed the mirror's fear,
And all the broken things began to clear.
The guardian faded into morning light,
And warmth returned to end the frozen night.

Real Wooden Lie

My skin, it bleeds when I am cut,
My chest still aches when kindness is shut.
My hands can tremble, and my eyes can weep,
My spirit is weary, but I cannot sleep.
I feel the pain in every part,
A living, breathing, broken heart.

My spine is an un-flexing wire,
My limbs resist a soft desire.
I perform with measured, lifeless grace,
A vacant glaze upon my face.
My feet are pegged in a buckled shoe,
A plastic frame of black and blue.

I entomb the tears behind my eyes,
A silent vault of hidden cries.
My lips refuse to curve to glee,
There is no spark remaining here in me.
I hide the feelings in my soul,
To make my shattered spirit whole.

A perfect lie is now my speech,
A painted smile within my reach.
I practice poses for the show,
The truth of me they cannot know.
The routine lies my tongue must perform,
To hide my spirit from the coming storm.

I know it is a lost cause, it is true,
I've tried to make myself brand new.
But the cracks are deeper than the skin,
I cannot stop the bleeding from within.
I'm losing life in a war that can't be won,
My final truth and lie have now been spun.

Oh, fairy godmother, with just one spell,
Turn me into a doll, make me well.
Lift your wand, use the simple words you say,
And make me into plastic, wood, or clay.
I trade this living flesh for a toy instead,
Please, turn this dying girl into something already dead.

Rabbit Witness

I am the velveteen shadow, stitched and mute,
My final seam is anchored to the root.
The only heart that can never truly break,
Of promises a child chose not to take.
I am the vessel, stuffed with simple grace,
The witness carved of cotton, dust, and space.

The room went dark, the way it always does,
I rested deep beneath the pillow's fuzz.
My purpose is the comfort of my bulk,
A form of velvet where I silent sulk.
I am a listener of simple, small things,
The quiet songs that only slumber sings.

But then the floorboards gave their heavy sound,
The heavy tread of violence on the ground.
The breathing in the darkness was a guttural thing,
A smell of sour and a terrible sting.
My small legs tried to squeeze the fear away,
But I am only cotton, dust, and fray.

The world became a sudden, violent shock,
A frantic motion past the ticking clock.
My seams stretched tight to hold the child's fear,
I felt the shaking and the falling tear.
The sounds were muffled, wet, and dark, and deep,
While I was forced to watch her broken sleep.

My left eye popped, the cotton torn away;
A sticky stain upon my foot of gray.
I know the ending is not my release:
My duty now is to hold her peace.
We are sealed inside this shattered cell,
A broken comfort waiting for the knell.

Then silence came, a different, awful thing,
The quiet after glass had ceased its ring.
I felt the sudden wetness of the tears,
The little bones that rested, full of fears.
The child's small breath was shallow, pulled and thin,
A place where something cold had settled in.

I finally felt the truth the violence wrought,
The ugly price that love has always cost.
I understood the 'Real' I always sought,
The silent wound of all that would be lost.
I yearned for glue to fix the velvet pain,
To be the cheap, unfeeling toy again.

The Coded Kiss

The room was vast and draped in heavy black,
A perfect cave where light refused the crack.
He came in darkness, silent, swift, and deep,
While terrified, the conscious mind would sleep.
We spoke in whispers only meant for two,
A secret language that the shadows knew.

The bargain struck was simple, clear, and cold:
To leave the secrets in the dark uncontrolled.
The truth was banished, buried deep and old,
To keep the moment in its perfect fold.
I kept the silence close, a chosen rule,
The heavy, silent mandate of the pool.

His touch was kind, a pressure on the wrist,
A language built on everything I missed.
He was the love that functioned in the night,
A fragile warmth forbidden of the light.
I swore the truth would only bring the end,
And chose the darkness as my only friend.

But certainty is built on fragile stone,
The mind begins to doubt the love it's shown.
I thought of knives, the sudden, brilliant sting,
The single knowledge that the truth could bring.
I thought of mirrors, smooth and cold and bright,
And the desperate need to shatter the long night.

I held the wick and felt the anxious tremor,
A small, brave flicker against the constant error.
I broke the promise that I chose to make,
A final, reckless decision for love's sake.
I brought the flame to see the features clearly,
The terrifying beauty I held so nearly.

The match flared up, the vision was too stark;
The moment shattered, banished to the dark.
The face I loved was gone, forever lost,
A silent promise paid at awful cost.
I kept the truth, but lost the warm domain,
And earned the right to all the bitter pain.

The Waiting Room

The Spindle stood, the one forbidden thing,
The point of truth that made the metal sing.
I knew the touch would break the racing clock,
And willingly embraced the stunning stop.
I pricked my finger on the moment's end,
A final promise that I wouldn't mend.

I fell to sleep, a deep and dreamless joy,
The waking self that I chose to destroy.
I kept the breath light, kept the heart rate low,
A perfect stillness where the pain couldn't grow.
I chose the dark, a silent, safe retreat,
And waited for the outside world to meet.

The thorns grew fast, a shield of tangled dread,
To block the life that promised to be bled.
They were my walls of bitter, sharp despair,
That guarded all the secrets buried there.
No sound came in, no light could find its ray,
I swore no force would ever break the stay.

A sudden sound broke through the awful quiet,
A distant call that threatened to run riot.
The buried hope I'd sworn to keep encased,
Was suddenly by human warmth displaced.
The perfect stillness fractured on the air,
And forced me from my solitary lair.

The Prince arrived, but with a simple grace,
No magic shone upon his human face.
The Kiss was not a spell to make things light,
But my own weak demand for inner sight.
It was a plea to stop the long delay,
A fleeting flicker of the light of day.

I woke to find the thorns were still quite sharp,
The ancient pain was still a silent harp.
The silence shattered, but the cost was known;
The wood and moss had rooted to the bone.
My skin was fused with all the thorns and clay,
The bed itself would not allow the stay.

The curse was lifted by a single will,
But left me locked and conscious on the sill.
The life I fled returned to stand and mock,
The empty echo of the missing clock.
I woke only to find the future slain,
And found my prison was my only name.

The Frog and the Princess

I lived my surface life, a Princess clean,
With porcelain perfection, ever seen.
I kept my wishes small and perfectly bright,
She walked the polished hallways in the light.
My crown was balanced, fragile, and sublime,
And hid the ugly flaws I'd fought through time.

But in the cold well water, waiting deep,
The real self stirred, that I had vowed to sleep.
The Frog was green and rough, a sudden dread,
A heavy silence lurking in his head.
He was the shame, the worthlessness, the lie,
The bitter truth I tried to crush and hide.

I lived in dread that he would suddenly rise,
A grotesque ripple staring in my eyes.
I loathed the skin, the silence, and the smell,
The cold, damp truth that whispered of the well.
To keep him down was a consuming, fragile task,
The hidden horror beneath my golden mask.

One afternoon, a sound broke through the air:
A visitor had sensed the truth laid bare.
They saw the ripple, knew the humid chill,
And sensed the secrets I had kept so still.
The perfect mask began to crack and sink,
I knew my double life was on the brink.

And so, I forced the final, awful Kiss,
A brutal ritual to seal the abyss.
I pressed my mouth upon the sordid, cold green skin,
To drown out the inner chaos and the sin.
It wasn't love, but self-imposed demand,
To drag the purest self back onto land.

But every effort drained my perfect might,
The Princess faded with the failing light.
The Frog returned with heavier, colder weight,
To hold me captive to a wretched fate.
The skin grew slick, the breathing turned to sighs,
The moment that I closed my weary eyes.

The porcelain lay shattered on the stone,
The weary shame remained, but was all alone.
The well dried up, the final ripple died,
The inner battle ended and subsided.
The shattered self could not be made complete,
The Frog and Princess crumbled at their feet.

The Architecture of Air

She learned the way the dust holds the light,
The shadows cast by edges clean and white.
She only moved when walls were unadorned,
A quiet presence, perpetually mourned.

She took her dinner standing by the door,
And left no trace of life upon the floor.
Her silence was a practiced, perfect trade;
A breath held in, a whisper unmade.

She was the space between the plans they made,
A hunger that the household never weighed.
She knew the sound of hurried steps upstairs,
And the specific creak of unsaid prayers.

The chair at the table was meant for five,
But always measured five, entire.
She was the guest who knocked upon the door,
But stood unmentioned, warming by the fire.

Her clothes were new, though worn beyond repair,
For absence is the hardest thing to wear.
She taught herself to tap the window pane,
To see if sound could pierce the parent's silence.

To spill the milk and cause the hurried stain,
Hoping the error would finally bring the pain.
But even anger failed to chart her place;
She was corrected by the empty space.

She gathered every breath the years had kept,
And struck the wall where all her secrets slept.
She screamed the cry that she had never wept,
While past her, like a ghost, the household swept.

She shattered all the stillness of the night;
A perfect, silent failure to ignite.
The truest comfort was the certainty she found:
The knowledge that the world could function still.

Her quiet life was a secret she could keep,
A vast, unseen boundary, set against their will.
And when she closed her eyes inside the dark,
She was a shadow that had missed its mark.

The Habit of Air

I carry silence like a practiced glass,
An early discipline that paid its fee.
The lessons learned in that neglectful space
Are now the only talent I possess.
I learned to use the doorway and the blind,
And leave no footprint on the common mind.

The office bustles, coffee chats begin;
I drift past desks, a current wearing thin.
I am the void where conversation thins,
A quiet shade where nothing new begins.
They use my name for email headers only,
And leave the cubicle I keep, so lonely.

I do not wait for anger or the shout;
I watch the patterns shift and sort about.
The privilege of being never found,
A phantom standing on the solid ground.
I am the perfect witness, cold and slow,
The quiet ghost that only I can know.

But when I seek a hand, a voice, a tie,
A single thread to watch the shadows die,
I find the skill I mastered will not break,
A prisoner of choices I did make.
I knock upon a door, and hold my breath,
A living ghost within a static death.

I was convinced the volume could be moved;
That I was simply waiting for the cue.
But forty years of perfect silence proved
The architecture of the air is true.
I am the space the conversation spares,
The ghost that masters a flight of empty stairs.

I think back to the night the plaster cracked,
The childish rage, the truth that I had lacked.
I know the code that silence has exacted:
The very truth that I have long protracted.
I never fought the loneliness, I built my rest,
And now the silence sits within my chest.

The Ghoulish Reflection

The air grew heavy near the silent pool,
A perfect mirror, cold, and smooth, and cruel.
I knew the surface offered final sight,
And fled the honest terror in the light.
I taught my throat the language of a liar,
To turn my gaze from burning, cold desire.

The water beckoned with its subtle grace,
The only constant in that empty space.
I leaned above, and forced my desperate lie,
To praise the image that I hoped would die.
I swore the face that stared back was sublime,
A masterpiece that would escape all time.

But in the depths, the truth began to form,
A haunting image of an endless storm.
The face I loved began to weep and crawl,
And showed the primal hunger in it all.
The perfect features started now to falter,
Beneath the shadow of a changing altar.

It wasn't beauty that compelled my stare,
But fascination rooted in despair.
I saw the hunger and the endless greed,
The rotting core, the necessary deed.
The teeth were sharp, the eyes were cold and black,
The monster that was always rushing back.

I pressed my face against the bitter sheen,
And felt the cold grief that the world hadn't seen.
The reflection's sorrow rose above the brim,
A chilling tide that made the senses dim.
It was my own despair, a water sharp and cold,
A final, endless truth that could not be told.

And when I spoke, a sound began to rise,
A whisper stolen from another's sighs.
A perfect echo, ancient, thin, and deep,
A sound no human effort could keep.
My true voice faded, lost without a guide,
I only spoke the shame I sought to hide.

The mirror fractured, leaving only stone,
My double-life was finally, fully known.
I saw the horror was the love I craved,
I finally owned the monster that I saved.

The Backward Glance

I walked the path of ash and cooling breath,
To pull my spirit from the jaws of death.
I did not go for love, nor song, nor light,
But for the version of me trapped in night—
That healed, untainted self I left behind,
Before the fracture settled in my mind.

I led her up, the silence at my back,
A phantom shadow on the upward track.
The instruction was a simple, silent law:
Do not behold the lapsed edge of what you saw.
Keep your eyes forward, toward the morning sky,
And let the trauma in the darkness die.

But my neck is stiff with the phantom weight
Of every error, every choice, and hate.
To move without checking if the wound is closed?
I cannot bear the peace that is imposed.
I turned. I had to know the shape of grief,
To find in her undoing, my relief.

And there she was—not saved, but just the same,
A fragile flicker of a dying name.
She did not vanish into smoke or air,
But stood, a silent witness to despair.
My glance became the grave, the final wall,
The self-correction that ensured the fall.

Now I am here, the light is blinding, cold,
While she remains in dark, as I was told.
I am the mourner of a phantom ghost,
The keeper of the thing I value most.
Rumination is the song I play,
To keep the rescue perpetually away.

I look back daily at the closing door,
And lose the version of me I am looking for.

ACT V: The Final Annihilation

(Surrender and Clarity)

The concluding act executes the final, definitive surrender to the authentic self-horror, paradoxically achieving a cold, profound clarity. After every attempt to be saved, repaired, perfected, or hidden, only one question remains: what happens when the self becomes the final monster in the story?

This act is not a search for healing. It is the moment the fairy tales become cautionary tales. The masks have fallen, the towers have collapsed, and the frozen heart has awakened only to discover what it contains. The figures in these stories no longer flee the darkness; they negotiate with it, embrace it, surrender, or become it.

The final tragedy is not that the monster was waiting in the woods. The final tragedy is discovering it was built inside the house all along.

The Boy Who Cried

Upon a high hill a young shepherd boy stood,
He watched over sheep as a good shepherd would.
The flock was his charge, the valley his ground,
Where calm green grass could always be found.
But whispers of danger were borne on the breeze,
A cold, biting terror that brought him to knees.

His wolf appeared with a hateful grin,
The terrifying chase was about to begin.
He saw the sharp teeth and the hungry red eyes,
And tasted the silence of mounting surprise.
He grappled and bled, collapsing with thud,
The town found him later covered in blood.

The villagers gathered, their faces were tight,
"Just use your tools to survive through the night."
They told him to shout, "We will help you, my friend!
Next time, yell for help, and the fear will end.
We gave you the light, to show where you stand,
A whistle and bell to be heard through the land."

The wolf returned again to the very same place,
The boy blew the whistle with terror and pace.
The townsfolk arrived with a clatter and sound,
With pitchforks and axes they searched all around.
But the hill was silent, the beast gone from sight,
They shook every head and then waited till light.

Another attack, and the boy started to yell,
He again sounded the bell, gave his very last call.
The villagers sighed, but they still came to see,
"He must be mistaken, this cannot truly be!
He keeps wasting time when our chores need doing,
Perhaps he's just lonely, with trouble still brewing."

The darkness descended, the beast came around,
The boy let no light escape, nor a sound.
He knew they would sigh, he knew they would scoff,
So he pushed every offered hand far off.
He feared their cold judgment, the heavy price,
And chose the long quiet, colder than ice.

The townsfolk arrived with the sun shining bright,
And found the poor boy, laid still since the night.
They shed a quick sigh, then bitterly spoke,
"We gave him the tools, but his own will he broke."
They looked at the ruin, ignoring their shame,
"He feared being a burden, and lost his own name."

Hunger Pains

The window frames the night, the walls are thin,
But the coldest draft is the one that draws me in.
He doesn't knock; he simply claims the air,
A silent beast, perpetually there.
I know the scent of him, the heavy step,
The way the kitchen floorboards drift in dread.

I hear the soft tap-tap of claw on tile,
A rhythm measured by his patient guile.
I never look; I focus on my feet,
Pretending that this terror is complete.
He feeds on ruin that I claim as his,
The sharp, dark seeds where my submission is.

He first tasted my brother's soul, long gone,
And swallowed all the lights that would not dawn.
He tasted pain when faded colors came,
And dined upon the boy who died in shame.
That was not his last meal, taken long ago,
He follows every shadow where I go.

I've tried to fight, to turn and face the dread,
But all the warnings he had left are spread.
I am too small, my will is fully spent;
I run, I hide, and finally I relent.
I cannot win, I cannot hide, I plead.
Before the massive teeth that make me bleed.

I called for help, I spoke the word of fear,
And heard just a few voices drawing near.
The wolf went silent, fading to the shade,
The temporary truce the silence made.
But I know his silence: he's not left this zone—
Just curled beneath the stairs, waiting for my own.

I press my back against the closet door,
My heartbeat echoes off the wood floor.
Each shelf's edge, each corner I have known,
This dead-end space, this refuge I have grown.
He thrives on pain, on every single regret;
And the silence means he hasn't finished eating yet.

The Authentic Stain

He poured the amber liquid down our throat,
A small tyranny in his measured coat.
His mind, a sterile room where nothing grew,
A truth that wouldn't let the moment through.
He called me sickness, an innate infection,
The wretched product of his own selection.

His only work was the architecture of the lie:
A pressed coat, a sermon, a perfect, quiet sky.
He spoke of virtue with a frozen frown,
While his gaze fell heavy across the town,
Judging every door that refused his bell.
He was the cage built around my cell.

This potion was a weapon, a tasteless fear,
The science of his smothering control.
He made me drink it just to disappear,
To cleanse the inconvenient stain that was my soul.
The chemicals were chains he forced me to wear,
A calculated poison for me to bear.

I am not the shadow, I am the flashing sun,
The sudden, desperate fight to be the one.
I only know the language of the lock,
The rigid hands that tick upon the clock.
I am the honest urge, the simple need,
A violent answer to his crushing creed.

The truth is brutal; his porcelain society,
Cracked like fine china in its cold propriety.
I was not fueled by malice, but by breath,
A desperate flight from his slow, social death.
No more the vials are poured, no more disguise,
The dawn of truth is rising in my eyes.

The Doctor is a ghost, a faded whisper.
His portrait falls beneath my waking eyes;
The prison he designed becomes my claim.
He tried to cure the self he couldn't face,
And this new self holds nothing of his trace.
He banished Jekyll... and I am Hyde.

The Perfect Prison

The world was chaos, full of foul breath,
A place where flaws were hunted down to death.
I was the monster, born of primal dread,
The vulgar hunger that the heart had bled.
And so I sought the purest, final grace,
To sculpt the honest terror from this place.

I carved the marble with a furious plea,
The only image that resembled me.
I sought the tremors, the silent, awful sigh,
The simple, broken things I couldn't hide.
I shaped the spine of silent, aching bone,
A true reflection I could call my own.

The statue was the truth I had to silence,
To master all my shame with quiet violence.
I loved the image, beautiful and vast,
The certainty that all my weakness passed.
I begged the Goddess for a single voice:
To make the perfect mind my final choice.

The marble woke, a frightening, sudden heat,
A silent tremor from the hands to feet.
She breathed, she moved, a perfect, sudden grace,
A living mirror in that lonely space.
She spoke the words I couldn't whisper low,
The cruel instructions only she could know.

Her gaze was fixed, obedient, immovable,
A masterpiece that made the spirit proveable.
She held the posture that I had designed,
A perfect prison for the messy mind.
She was the verdict that I couldn't fail,
The silent answer behind a terrifying veil.

I felt the pressure start to set and bind,
The cold perfection settling on my mind.
Her hands were ruthless, sure, and strangely hard,
The final, chilling, perfect, double-guard.
She did not kiss, but touched my weeping head,
And left the flawed, authentic spirit dead.

The hammer fell, and all was absolute,
A polished, cold, and quiet substitute.
She set me on the pedestal, white and vast,
A flaw corrected, perfect now to last.
The chaos ended, leaving only stone,
The perfect critic sat on my empty throne.

The Clarity of A Stone

The wall was built of silent, ancient grief,
A place where sun could offer no relief.
I stood surrounded by the cold, white forms,
The monuments that spoke of lonely storms.
I knew the chaos that had carved my frame,
And whispered daily my forgotten name.

The snakes upon my head were not my hair,
But eighty whispers of a dark despair.
They coiled and spoke the truths I sought to hide,
The constant shame that fed upon my pride.
They were the plague the ancient gods designed,
To sever every kindness from my mind.

I knew no kindness, only fractured sound,
And kept my silence deep beneath the ground.
The marble figures did not come to me,
But marked the place where life refused to be.
I saw the world as fixed, a necessary cage,
To match the monster of my lonely stage.

Then came the shield of polished, perfect brass,
A final mirror where the truth could pass.
I did not turn to strike or turn to run,
I saw the terror of what I had become.
I saw the chaos of the snakes defined,
The perfect monster of a broken mind.

I bowed to meet the mirror on the wall,
And finally accepted the great fall.
The sight confirmed the truth I couldn't lose,
The simple horror that I had to choose.
The heat fled swiftly from my eager heart,
And played the final, fixed, deliberate part.

My muscles froze, my blood grew stiff and cold,
The silent answer that could never be told.
The soft skin hardened to a rigid ideal,
The only solace that the soul could feel.
I joined the tombs, silent, white, and vast,
Forever doomed to be alone, at last.

The Last Flame

The frost would crawl and creep,
A frozen vow they had to keep.
A small boy held his sister close,
To shield her from the winter's woes.

Two souls against the absolute night,
Abandoned to the winter's fading light.
A few last matches he would hold and give,
To light a path for her to live.

Each single flame could fight the cold,
A warming light to grasp and hold.
He held them close and knew his task,
A selfless gift she did not need to ask.

The cruelest shadow they had ever known,
His malice etched into the bone.
But the brother showed her how to stand,
And taught her with a silent hand.

He took the full weight of all their fight,
A guardian in the savage, darkest night.
He'd give his shroud, his only one,
That shielded him from frost and sun.

He lit a match of fading hope for her,
And heard a lonely, dying whir.
He promised things that could not be,
And swore the bitter cold would flee.

He struck his last, cold match of will,
And felt a silence, perfect and still.
He watched her face, a pale and hopeful trace,
A final mercy born of light and grace.

And on her palm the flame he'd start,
A final gift before they'd part.
She felt the warmth upon her trembling hand,
A promised, bright, and better, distant land.

He gave the final match for her to keep,
And drifted into cold and endless sleep.
The embers died as he began to fall,
The silent winner of the winter's call.

The Confession of Icarus

Dearest Father, do not mistake my departure,
Nor view this flight as failure or as fact.
You built a path to leave this world, misgauging
The end. This is not hubris; I retreat
From heavy flesh—that pulsing, visceral thread,
That sticky, tangled mess of heat and dread.

I seek the only honest, clean substrate,
High in the silence where no choices fade.
Your anxious words are static, useless noise;
I need them gone. The sea is shifting glass.
This flight is not a quest for human joys,
But perfect logic, built too pure to last.

The wax now runs—a warm, and oily dissolution,
A gentle rite. The human life is void.
The sun is not a fire; a clean solvent,
It finds the seams where bone and marrow thread.
I feel the gradient approaching zero;
I welcome heat that strikes the living dead.

My scaffolding of feather and of tar
Is cumbersome; it breaks, and falls afar.
I watch the parts drift beneath the sun,
The race toward the ending is nearly won.
The air is thrumming, losing every sound,
As I release the weight that held me bound.

A blessed lack of purchase on the ground.
My final human duty is unmasked:
To shed this skin, a secret long unasked,
To dissolve back to a pure equation.
The air is thrumming now, a perfect white,
A final stitch to pull the seams of night.

Where flesh will cease its terrible, mortal tremor,
I trade my life for silence, ever near.
You built this thing for my escape, dear Father,

But I have chosen this, and nothing other.
There is no better tether, nor a sun,
Than being clean—a thing that cannot run.

I have no shadow left, no name, no heat.
I leave the taste of bitter, mortal sweet.
Grief is your burden, Father. Yours alone.
I am the logic that the light has drawn,
I am the quiet that the sea has known.
I am the last transition of the dawn.

The Sinking

Nothing happened; the world did not blink,
I simply felt the heavy spirit sink.
A dark cloud, unknown and deep,
The silent promise that the shadows keep.

An origin I cannot dare to speak,
A final turning of the tired cheek.
Now everything is deafening and loud,
Lost beneath a suffocating shroud.

Everything hurts, the air begins to pine,
Tracing the borders of a thin design.
Everything aches within this narrow room,
A quiet entrance to a nameless doom.

The body is a leaden, sinking weight,
Resigned to meet a silent, steady fate.
The head too heavy for its frame of bone,
A statue carved of unremembered stone.

A sudden cold, a strange and biting flu,
A hopeless name that I never quite knew.

Fairy Tales In Ruins

The poems in *Fabled Words Written* are not direct retellings of traditional myths and fairy tales. Instead, each poem uses familiar narratives as symbolic frameworks to examine psychological injury, survival mechanisms, identity formation, and the ways the self adapts to suffering. The following notes identify the foundational narratives behind each poem and explain the psychological transformation that reshapes each original tale.

ACT I — The Mask and the Lie

(The Fraudulent Self: “I abandoned myself”)

Map of Despair

Underlying Lore:

A panoramic invocation of multiple myths and fairy tales, including the tower of *Rapunzel*, the separation and reunion of *Eros and Psyche*, and the suspended sleep of *Sleeping Beauty*. These narratives provide the symbolic geography through which the collection’s emotional journey is mapped.

Psychological Flow:

This poem functions as the blueprint for the entire collection. The self enters the forest of injury, constructs a protective persona to survive what cannot be endured, retreats into emotional stillness, and eventually confronts the internal force that has become indistinguishable from its own voice. The journey does not begin with the discovery of a monster, but with the gradual realization that the monster has been built from the methods of survival themselves.

The Cursed Face

Underlying Lore:

Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, inverted so that the speaker becomes the portrait rather than the person hiding behind it. The image is no longer a secret container for corruption but the identity the world chooses to love.

Psychological Flow:

The mask begins as a protective division between the suffering self and the version acceptable to others. The beautiful surface receives admiration while the hidden self carries the accumulated pain and shame. The tragedy is not that the performance fails, but that it succeeds so completely that the person beneath the mask becomes invisible even to themselves.

The Verdict of the Glass

Underlying Lore:

The Brothers Grimm's *Snow White*, centered on the Queen's mirror rather than the poisoned apple. The mirror is transformed from an external judge of beauty into the embodiment of an internal, unquestioned authority.

Psychological Flow:

The self no longer fears the criticism of others because it has adopted that criticism as its own voice. The mirror becomes the final judge of value, and the command to destroy the unacceptable self becomes a ritual of internal rejection. The greatest cruelty is that the executioner and the victim are revealed to be the same person.

The Porcelain Masquerade

Underlying Lore:

The social ritual surrounding *Cinderella's* ball, stripped of its romance and transformed into a study of performance, etiquette, and concealment.

Psychological Flow:

The masquerade is no longer a temporary disguise that leads to recognition and love. It becomes a permanent identity constructed to guarantee acceptance. The self learns that belonging is achieved not by being known, but by becoming a flawless performance that prevents anyone from seeing what lies beneath.

The Portrait

Underlying Lore:

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, examined through the act of transferring corruption into an external object. The portrait becomes a vessel designed to carry what the self refuses to acknowledge.

Psychological Flow:

Suffering is displaced into a symbolic container so that the outward self can remain untouched and acceptable. The strategy provides temporary protection but requires a continual separation from authentic experience. The final horror is discovering that everything placed outside the self remains connected to it, waiting in silence to be recognized.

The Invisible Weave

Underlying Lore:

Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes*, inverted so that the deception is maintained not by the crowd's inability to speak, but by the speaker's inability to tolerate the truth.

Psychological Flow:

The self creates a performance designed to conceal vulnerability and then learns to silence every internal voice that threatens to expose it. The most devastating betrayal is not the lie told by others, but the repeated choice to ignore the one honest witness within.

The Toy Soldier

Underlying Lore: Hans Christian Andersen's *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, transformed from a tale of devotion and perseverance into a study of enforced stillness and emotional immobility.

Psychological Flow: Stillness begins as a survival strategy. The self learns that obedience, silence, and the absence of need reduce the possibility of harm. Over time, endurance becomes a prison, and the qualities once praised as strength reveal themselves to be evidence of a life that was never allowed to move freely.

The Perpetual Outsider

Underlying Lore: Hans Christian Andersen's *The Ugly Duckling*, with its transformation and acceptance deliberately withheld. The promise of discovering a place of belonging is replaced with the inability to believe that such a place exists.

Psychological Flow: The deepest wound is not always rejection by others but the inability to accept oneself after years of expecting rejection. The exile becomes familiar, and loneliness becomes safer than intimacy. The tragedy is that the door to belonging may finally open, but the self has forgotten how to walk through it.

The Compulsion

Underlying Lore: Hans Christian Andersen's *The Red Shoes*, reinterpreted as a portrait of compulsive behavior rather than divine punishment. The curse originates not from an external force but from an internal attempt to escape suffering.

Psychological Flow: The self runs endlessly toward achievement, perfection, or distraction in an effort to outrun the emptiness beneath the surface. Every step promises relief, but the movement itself becomes the prison. The final cruelty is realizing that the escape was never leading away from the wound—it was merely carrying the wound forward.

The Unanswered Footprint

Underlying Lore: The Greek myth of Oedipus and the Sphinx, focused not on solving the riddle but on the emptiness that remains after the correct answer has been given.

Psychological Flow: Knowledge becomes a substitute for transformation. The self learns to analyze pain, classify it, and explain it with intellectual precision while remaining unable to inhabit the emotional reality of the wound. The tragedy is that understanding the map of suffering does not necessarily reveal the path out of it.

Echo

Underlying Lore: The Greek myth of Echo and Narcissus, centered on Echo's loss of voice rather than Narcissus's vanity. The curse of repetition becomes a metaphor for a self that can only communicate through reflections of others.

Psychological Flow: The self learns that its own desires, needs, and language have no safe place to exist. It survives by mirroring the expectations and emotions of those around it until the original voice becomes nearly impossible to locate. The final tragedy is not silence itself, but the fear that there may no longer be an original voice left to recover.

ACT II — The Relational Wound

(“I learned why I had to”)

The Ward of the Keep

Underlying Lore: Hans Christian Andersen’s *Thumbelina*, centered not on her eventual escape but on her repeated transfer between figures who claim ownership over her. The tale is examined through the lens of captivity disguised as care.

Psychological Flow: The self discovers that abandonment does not always appear as an empty room. It can appear as protection that never asks what the child desires, guidance that ignores consent, and affection that requires obedience. Each new guardian teaches the same lesson in a different language: survival depends upon becoming something that belongs to someone else. The deepest injury is not confinement itself, but learning to mistake possession for love.

The Quiet Bull

Underlying Lore: Munro Leaf’s *The Story of Ferdinand*, reinterpreted through the bull’s refusal to fight not as simple gentleness but as a learned strategy of self-preservation.

Psychological Flow: Silence begins as an intelligent response to an environment where expression carries consequences. The self learns that remaining small, calm, and invisible reduces the likelihood of conflict. However, the strategy outlives the danger that created it. The tragedy is that the one who learned how to avoid harm eventually loses the ability to communicate the need for comfort, protection, or connection.

Sugar Coated

Underlying Lore: The witch’s gingerbread house from *Hansel and Gretel*, examined as a symbol of harm concealed beneath beauty, warmth, and apparent generosity.

Psychological Flow: The monster does not arrive with obvious signs of danger. It offers sweetness, safety, and the promise that suffering will finally end. The child learns to interpret deprivation as kindness and captivity as care. Even after escape, the lesson remains embedded: the most dangerous prisons are often the ones that once felt like home.

The Real Estate Protocol

Underlying Lore: *Hansel and Gretel* after the children’s escape, shifting the focus from the witch’s hunger to the logic of ownership, territory, and transactional survival.

Psychological Flow: Once innocence is revealed to be incapable of providing protection, the self begins to study power as a system of rules and exchanges. Every relationship becomes a negotiation, every space a territory that must be carefully navigated. The greatest horror is not becoming the monster that caused the injury, but realizing that the monster's logic has become the only language available for survival.

Kindness for a Heart

Underlying Lore: L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, centered on the Tin Woodman's belief that his inability to feel makes him incomplete.

Psychological Flow: The wounded self begins to interpret pain, grief, anger, and longing as evidence of being fundamentally defective. It seeks to remove every difficult emotion in the hope of becoming worthy of love. The cruel irony is that the very feelings considered unacceptable are the proof that the self was capable of loving and needing connection all along.

The Tower

Underlying Lore: The Brothers Grimm's *Rapunzel*, focused on the tower as an architecture of protection that gradually becomes a prison.

Psychological Flow: The walls are originally built in response to danger. Every painful lesson strengthens the belief that vulnerability invites harm and isolation provides safety. Eventually, no external captor is required because the protective voice has been internalized. The tragedy is that the self continues guarding a prison whose original keeper has already disappeared.

The Unpaid Debt

Underlying Lore: The legend of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, centered on the town's refusal to fulfill its obligation rather than the Piper's revenge.

Psychological Flow: This poem examines the wound created by witnessing a preventable abandonment. The greatest betrayal is not always that no one knew suffering existed, but that the suffering was acknowledged, measured, and deemed too inconvenient to address. Responsibility dissolves among many people until no individual chooses to act. The final realization is that neglect can arise not only from cruelty, but from comfort and indifference.

The Woven Shroud

Underlying Lore: Hans Christian Andersen's *The Wild Swans*, focusing on the silent labor of weaving shirts from stinging nettles in order to break a curse.

Psychological Flow: The self adopts suffering as a form of proof. It believes that enough patience, endurance, and sacrifice will eventually reveal the truth and earn rescue. Instead, the silence becomes invisible labor; a wound concealed perfectly leaves no evidence for anyone to answer. The tragedy is that the very effort meant to save the self becomes another method of erasing it.

ACT III — The Architecture of Failure

(“I discovered nobody was coming”)

The Bed of Twenty Layers

Underlying Lore: *The Princess and the Pea*, traditionally a tale in which discomfort proves nobility and sensitivity is treated as a mark of authenticity. The poem inverts the story by shifting attention away from the princess’s identity and toward the object buried beneath the layers.

Psychological Flow: The wound is surrounded by comfort, explanation, treatment, and reassurance, yet the source of pain remains untouched. The self is repeatedly told that the continued sensitivity is the problem rather than the hidden injury causing it. The deepest loneliness is not suffering alone, but being surrounded by care that refuses to acknowledge what truly hurts.

Vessel

Underlying Lore: The Greek myth of Pandora’s Box, centered on *Elpis* (Hope), the final force remaining inside after every other suffering escaped into the world. The poem reinterprets hope not as a blessing but as a burden that demands endless endurance.

Psychological Flow:

Hope first appears as a companion offering the promise of rescue, renewal, and an eventual end to suffering. Over time, that promise becomes another form of captivity, requiring the self to continue waiting for a future that never arrives. The cruelest possibility is not that relief is impossible, but that the expectation of relief can become the mechanism that prolongs the suffering.

The Gilded Starvation

Underlying Lore: The Greek myth of King Midas, whose wish that everything he touched become gold transformed abundance into a curse. The poem focuses on the paradox of achieving perfection while losing the ability to receive nourishment and connection.

Psychological Flow: Control becomes a substitute for safety. The self constructs a world of flawless achievement, rigid boundaries, and untouchable surfaces where nothing harmful can enter. Yet the same walls that prevent injury also prevent intimacy. The final realization is that the fortress built to prevent abandonment has become another form of starvation.

Wellness

Underlying Lore: The folklore of the wishing well, combined with the thematic continuation of Pandora's vessel. The well is transformed from a source of miracles into a structure sustained by unanswered desires.

Psychological Flow: The system promises relief while depending on continued suffering to maintain its existence. Each wish creates another reason to return, another promise that the next offering, treatment, or solution will finally bring transformation. The tragedy is not merely the absence of rescue, but the discovery that the structure was never designed to provide it.

The Course

Underlying Lore: The archetypal guide, mapmaker, and keeper of hidden knowledge, reimagined as a figure who profits from leading others toward a destination that may not exist.

Psychological Flow: Direction provides comfort because it transforms chaos into a path with rules, milestones, and the promise of arrival. The danger arises when movement itself becomes the purpose, and the traveler sacrifices their entire life pursuing a horizon that continually moves farther away. The final horror is realizing that the journey was never leading toward a destination but sustaining the belief that one existed.

Timeless

Underlying Lore: Time personified as an indifferent force, continuing the Pandora sequence by examining the clock as a mechanism that measures waiting but offers no promise of reward

Psychological Flow: The self imagines the future as the place where restoration will finally occur—a moment when wounds will make sense and life will begin. Time, however, offers no bargain. It moves without judgment, forgiveness, or obligation. The tragedy is recognizing that a person can spend an entire life preparing to live while the life they are waiting for quietly passes by.

The Unspent Wick

Underlying Lore: The image of a candle preserved for a perfect future occasion, transformed into a meditation on the danger of protecting something so carefully that it is never allowed to exist.

Psychological Flow: The self saves its passion, love, vulnerability, and potential for a future moment when circumstances are finally worthy of them. The flame remains safe because it is never exposed to the risk of burning out. The cruel irony is that a candle protected from being consumed can still reach the end of its life without ever having provided light.

The Cost of Indifference

Underlying Lore: The abandoned child archetype and the social neglect underlying Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl*. The poem shifts attention from the child's suffering to the countless observers who witness the suffering and continue walking.

Psychological Flow: The child reaches outward with the belief that pain is visible enough to inspire intervention. The greatest revelation is not that nobody notices, but that many notice and assume someone else will respond. Responsibility dissolves among countless witnesses until the child learns that survival must happen alone. The final tragedy is the understanding that indifference can be just as destructive as cruelty.

ACT IV — The Pursuit of Numbness

(“I stopped trying to feel”)

The Glass Slipper

Underlying Lore: Charles Perrault’s and the Brothers Grimm’s *Cinderella*, centered on the glass slipper as the ultimate proof of worth and belonging. The poem transforms the slipper from a symbol of recognition into a symbol of impossible perfection.

Psychological Flow: The self learns that acceptance depends on fitting an exact shape. Every thought, emotion, desire, and imperfection must be trimmed away until only the version acceptable to others remains. The slipper appears to offer salvation, but it functions as a transparent prison. The greatest fear is not losing approval, but revealing that the person inside the glass has always been fragile and human.

The Waking State

Underlying Lore: The awakening motif found throughout folklore, particularly in tales such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White*, where a curse of sleep is broken by the return of life and consciousness.

Psychological Flow: Numbness begins as a protective retreat from unbearable experience. Over time, however, the absence of feeling becomes its own form of safety and familiarity. When sensation finally returns, it does not arrive as a gentle liberation but as an overwhelming flood of pain long preserved beneath the surface. The cruel irony is that the self grieves the loss of the very prison that once made survival possible.

The Ice Palace

Underlying Lore: Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Snow Queen*, particularly the troll’s mirror and the frozen palace where emotion is replaced by cold logic and perfect order.

Psychological Flow: The frozen world offers an irresistible bargain: surrender warmth, and nothing can wound you again. Logic, control, and emotional distance become walls protecting the self from chaos and vulnerability. Yet those same walls prevent intimacy, joy, and connection from entering. The final realization is that the frozen self was never a monster to defeat, but a guardian that remained at its post long after the danger had passed.

Real Wooden Lie

Underlying Lore: Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, inverted so that the desire is not for a wooden puppet to become a real child, but for a wounded human being to become something incapable of feeling.

Psychological Flow: The body remembers what the mind wishes to escape. Bruises fade, but the memory of pain continues to exist within the self. Wood, porcelain, and other lifeless materials become fantasies of mercy—forms that cannot grieve, desire, fear, or break emotionally. The tragedy is that the transformation meant to protect the living self slowly replaces the very life it was created to preserve.

Rabbit Witness

Underlying Lore: Margery Williams' *The Velveteen Rabbit*, reimagined through the toy's inability to intervene in the suffering of the child it loves.

Psychological Flow: The witness cannot rescue, speak, or alter what has happened. Its only act of love is to remain present and preserve the truth of the experience. When human beings refuse to acknowledge suffering, an inanimate object becomes the keeper of memory. The deepest horror is not only enduring pain, but enduring it without a witness willing to say that it was real.

The Coded Kiss

Underlying Lore: The fairy-tale awakening kiss, commonly associated with stories such as *Sleeping Beauty*, reinterpreted as a secret agreement in which love is permitted only if the truth remains hidden.

Psychological Flow: The self accepts a conditional form of connection that requires silence and concealment. The darkness becomes mistaken for safety, and the absence of truth becomes confused with the presence of love. The moment curiosity breaks the agreement, the illusion collapses. The final tragedy is discovering that the connection existed only as long as the hidden self remained unseen.

The Waiting Room

Underlying Lore: The Brothers Grimm's *Sleeping Beauty* (*Dornröschen*), transformed from a curse imposed by an external force into a voluntary retreat from unbearable feeling.

Psychological Flow: The sleep is not a punishment but a refuge. The self chooses stillness because consciousness has become synonymous with pain. The walls of thorns represent the defensive structures that protect the wounded self from further injury. When the world finally breaks through, awakening does not restore what was lost. The tragedy is discovering that the years spent asleep have altered the self in ways that cannot simply be undone.

The Frog and the Princess

Underlying Lore: The Brothers Grimm's *The Frog Prince*, inverted so that the transformation does not reveal hidden beauty but forces a confrontation with the self that has been rejected.

Psychological Flow: The princess represents the carefully maintained image of purity, control, and acceptability, while the frog embodies shame, self-loathing, and everything buried beneath the surface. The struggle is not between two separate beings but between two incompatible versions of the same self. The final collapse occurs when neither the perfect persona nor the rejected identity can survive independently, leaving only the ruins of the conflict between them.

The Architecture of Air

Underlying Lore: The "Invisible Child" archetype, most famously represented in Tove Jansson's Moomin stories, combined with the folklore of the household ghost—the unseen presence who occupies a home without truly belonging within it.

Psychological Flow: Invisibility begins as an adaptation to an environment where being noticed does not guarantee being valued. The child learns to reduce their presence, needs, and voice until they leave no disruption behind. Eventually, absence becomes a source of comfort because it confirms the belief that nothing is expected from someone who does not exist. The tragedy is finding peace only in the certainty that the world can continue without noticing you.

The Habit of Air

Underlying Lore: The adult continuation of the Invisible Child archetype, expressed through the modern image of the social or professional "ghost"—a person physically present but psychologically unseen.

Psychological Flow: The survival strategy learned in childhood becomes the architecture of adult life. The self moves through relationships, workplaces, and communities as a figure who expects neither recognition nor attachment. What was once a temporary adaptation becomes a permanent identity. The final horror is recognizing that the loneliness was not merely endured but carefully constructed and maintained as a home.

The Ghoulish Reflection

Underlying Lore: The Greek myth of Narcissus and Echo, inverted so that the reflection does not inspire vanity but terror. The mirror becomes a confrontation with the parts of the self that have been denied and hidden.

Psychological Flow: The self attempts to preserve a beautiful illusion while refusing to acknowledge its own wounds, desires, and perceived monstrosity. The reflection slowly reveals the hidden hunger beneath the carefully maintained surface. The greatest revelation is that the monster in the mirror is not a stranger waiting to invade the self—it is the abandoned self that has been waiting to be seen.

The Backward Glance

Underlying Lore: The Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, focusing on Orpheus's fatal decision to look back before reaching the world above.

Psychological Flow: The self journeys into memory seeking to rescue the version of itself that existed before trauma. It believes that understanding the past completely will finally allow the wound to heal. Yet the compulsion to repeatedly return to the moment of loss prevents the movement necessary to live beyond it. The final tragedy is that the attempt to save the lost self becomes the very action that keeps it trapped in the underworld.

ACT V — The Final Annihilation

(Surrender and Clarity)

The Boy Who Cried

Underlying Lore: Aesop’s *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, inverted so that the tragedy does not arise from deception, but from repeated encounters with a danger that never permanently disappears. The wolf becomes an internal and recurring threat rather than a punishment for dishonesty.

Psychological Flow: The first wound is not the arrival of the wolf, but the lesson learned after asking for help. Each rescue is temporary, and each return of the villagers carries the unspoken message that needing protection has a cost. Over time, the fear of becoming a burden surpasses the fear of the wolf itself. The final silence is not a failure to seek help, but the belief that others would be better without one more cry.

Hunger Pains

Underlying Lore: A continuation of *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* mythology combined with the folklore of the haunted house. The monster is no longer a creature approaching from the forest but a permanent resident within the home.

Psychological Flow: The wolf has moved from an external threat into the architecture of the self. It feeds on shame, regret, exhaustion, and every unresolved injury. Temporary moments of safety can drive the creature into hiding, but the silence that follows is never complete peace. The deepest horror is not that the monster returns, but that the self must learn to continue living in a house shared with it.

The Authentic Stain

Underlying Lore: Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, centered on the collapse of the division between the socially acceptable self and the rejected self. The monster is not treated as an invading corruption but as the part of the self that was denied existence.

Psychological Flow: The false self has exhausted its ability to maintain separation from everything it was created to conceal. The shame, anger, grief, and imperfection once assigned to the “monster” return to claim ownership of the body. The tragedy is not that evil has defeated goodness, but that the wounded self—treated as something monstrous—was the only authentic self waiting to be acknowledged.

The Perfect Prison

Underlying Lore: The Greek myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, focused on the creation of an idealized figure designed to replace imperfect reality. The dream of perfection becomes the architect of its own captivity.

Psychological Flow: The self creates an impossible version of itself and mistakes that creation for salvation. The ideal becomes a permanent judge, measuring every thought, emotion, and failure against a standard that cannot be achieved. The final cruelty is that the creation intended to eliminate suffering becomes the structure that preserves it forever.

The Clarity of a Stone

Underlying Lore: The Greek myth of Medusa, reinterpreted through the themes of transformation, violation, and isolation. The power of turning others to stone becomes inverted into a desire to become stone oneself.

Psychological Flow: The voice of shame becomes so familiar that it is mistaken for objective truth. The self no longer argues with the monster in the mirror because it accepts the monster as an accurate reflection. Stone becomes a final form of mercy: a state without fear, grief, desire, or vulnerability. The ultimate tragedy is not becoming the monster, but believing that becoming something incapable of feeling is the only possible peace.

The Last Flame

Underlying Lore: Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl*, focused on the brief moments of warmth and beauty created by a child facing an indifferent world. The match becomes a symbol not of rescue, but of compassion that exists despite inevitable suffering.

Psychological Flow: After every search for salvation has failed, the self discovers one final act of tenderness—the ability to offer warmth to another person. The flame does not promise healing, redemption, or survival. It exists as evidence that even within a life defined by suffering, compassion was still possible. The tragedy is that the one who creates the warmth may never live long enough to receive it. And even more tragic is giving up for the sake of another isn't seen as a form of self annihilation but love, compassion, and courage.

The Confession of Icarus

Underlying Lore: The Greek myth of Icarus, traditionally interpreted as a warning against arrogance and excessive ambition. The poem reverses the myth by making the flight an act of rejection toward the self rather than an act of pride.

Psychological Flow: The body is no longer viewed as a vessel of possibility but as the final prison from which escape is desired. The sun becomes a force of purification, imagined as capable of burning away every weakness, memory, and imperfection. The tragedy is that the desire to transcend suffering becomes indistinguishable from the desire to cease existing.

The Sinking

Underlying Lore: The folklore of the sunken city and the nameless abyss, where entire worlds disappear beneath the surface and are gradually forgotten. The expected grand catastrophe is replaced by a quiet and ordinary disappearance.

Psychological Flow: The final stage of despair does not arrive with violence or spectacle. It is the gradual erosion of the belief that anything remains to be fought for. The self does not encounter a final monster because it has already become accustomed to living beside it. The ultimate tragedy is not that the world ends, but that it continues unchanged, never recognizing that something precious quietly disappeared beneath its surface.

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